

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 IO-10 ISO-00 SS-15 AID-05 DEAE-00 CIAE-00

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4779

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION GENEVA

USUN NEW YORK 966

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 THE HAGUE 5725

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR, TBIO, NL, US

SUBJECT: US-NETHERLANDS NARCOTICS COOPERATION:
PROPOSAL FOR JOINT RESEARCH

REF: A. MEMCON FROM EUR/WE OF 4/29/74, US-NETHS
NARCOTICS COOPERATION (NOTAL)

B. 4/8/74 MEMO TO FILES FROM CANDACE COWAN
(SAODAP), "VISIT BY DUTCH OFFICIAL " (NOTAL)

C. S/NM MEMCON OF 4/8/74, "DRUG ABUSE CONTROLS:
VISIT OF NETHERLANDS STATE SECRETARY"
(NOTAL)

SUMMARY: DURING HIS VISIT TO THE US IN APRIL THIS YEAR,
THE DUTCH STATE SECY FOR CULTURE, RECREATION, AND SOCIAL
WELFARE (CRM), WILLEM MEIJER, PROPOSED CLOSER
COOPERATION BETWEEN THE US AND THE NETHERLANDS IN
EXCHANGING INFORMATION ON NARCOTICS RESEARCH PROJECTS,
PARTICULARLY THOSE CONCERNED WITH SOCIAL ASPECTS. AS
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A RECENT FOLLOW-UP TO MEIJER'S INITIATIVE, THE CHAIRMAN

OF GON INTERDEPARTMENTAL NARCOTICS WORKING GROUP HAS CALLED AT THE EMBASSY TO INQUIRE RE POSSIBLE US INTEREST IN PARTICIPATING IN A BILATERAL RESEARCH PROJECT DIRECTED AT DETERMINING THE EFFECTS OF CHRONIC CANNABIS USE ON THE ABILITY OF INDIVIDUALS TO PERFORM COMPLEX MENTAL INTELLECTUAL TASKS. ACTION REQUESTED: SEE PARA 11. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING HIS VISIT TO US IN APRIL THIS YEAR AS AN IVP GRANTEE, THE STATE SECY FOR CULTURE, RECREATION AND SOCIAL WELFARE, WILLEM MEIJER, DISCUSSED WITH VARIOUS WASHINGTON AGENCY OFFICIALS (STATE, SAODAP, NIDA) THE NARCOTICS SITUATION IN HOLLAND AND US, AND TENTATIVELY EXPLORED POSSIBILITIES FOR EXPANDED COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES IN THE FIELD OF INFORMATION EXCHANGE ON QUESTIONS RELATED TO NARCOTICS USE/ABUSE, PARTICULARLY THE SOCIAL ASPECTS THEREOF. THE MEMORANDA UNDER REFERENCE REFLECT A POSITIVE REACTION TO MEIJER'S PROPOSAL BY THE US OFFICIALS WITH WHOM HE MET.

2. AS A FOLLOW-UP TO THIS INITIATIVE, THE GON INTER-DEPARTMENTAL WORKING GROUP ON NARCOTICS QUESTIONS RECENTLY DISPATCHED ITS CHAIRMAN, ROBBERT SAMSOM, TO EXPLORE WITH THE EMBASSY WHETHER THERE MAY BE ANY INTEREST ON THE PART OF THE US IN ENGAGING WITH THE DUTCH IN A JOINT RESEARCH EFFORT AIMED AT IDENTIFYING THE CONSEQUENCES OF CHRONIC CANNABIS USE ON THE USER'S ABILITY TO PERFORM MENTALLY EXACTING TASKS.

3. AS AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE SORT OF INFORMATION WHICH SUCH A STUDY COULD GENERATE, SAMSOM CITED THE FINDINGS OF DR. HARVEY POWELSON, AS REPORTED BY THE LATTER ON MAY 9, 1974 IN TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE'S SUBCOMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE INTERNAL SECURITY ACT AND OTHER INTERNAL SECURITY LAWS (SEE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD-SENATE, PP. S13323-4). SAMSOM EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT IF OTHER OBJECTIVE STUDIES WERE TO CORROBORATE THE FINDINGS OF INVESTIGATORS SUCH AS POWELSON, THE DATA WOULD BE OF CONSIDERABLE VALUE TO EXPERTS IN THE GOVERNMENT BUREAUCRACY (SUCH AS SAMSOM)
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WHO MUST PROVIDE THEIR MINISTERS WITH SOUND ARGUMENTATION IN SUPPORT OF PROPOSED POLICY OPTIONS IN THE CONTROL FIELD. AS IT IS NOW, STUDIES ON THE EFFECTS OF CANNABIS DERIVATIVES ON MENTAL PROCESSES ARE RELATIVELY FEW AS COMPARED TO SIMILAR STUDIES WITH OTHER DRUGS; THOSE DATA WHICH ARE AVAILABLE ON THIS QUESTION, SAID SAMSOM, GENERALLY SUFFER FROM EITHER OLD AGE OR POOR SAMPLING OR ARE TAINTED BY THE PRCLIVITY

OF THE RESEARCHERS CONCERNED TO BECOME IDENTIFIED WITH ONE OR ANOTHER SCHOOL OF THOUGHT ON THE POLICY ISSUE OF CANNABIS LEGALIZATION, THUS CASTING DOUBT ON THE OBJECTIVITY OF THEIR RESEARCH.

4. SAMSOM STRESSED THAT THE PROPOSED JOINT STUDY MUST NOT MAKE USE OF FINDINGS BY INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE EITHER EXPRESSED OPINIONS ON THE POLITICAL ASPECTS OF THE QUESTION OR WHO MAY IN ANY WAY BE IDENTIFIED AS PARTIAL TO ANY PERSUASION, LEST THIS GIVE REASON OR OPPORTUNITY FOR THE POLITICAL LEVELS TO REJECT THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THEIR TECHNICAL ADVISERS BECAUSE OF QUESTIONABLE SUPPORTING DATA.

5. THE EMBASSY NARCOTICS CONTROL OFFICER ASKED SAMSON WHETHER THE INTEREST IN CANNABIS DISPLAYED BY THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL UNDER DISCUSSION REFLECTED ANY RESERVATION ON THE PART OF THE GON TO PROCEED WITH ITS AVOWED POLICY OF (A) INITIALLY "DEPENALIZING" CANNABIS USE AND PROVIDING FOR LESS SEVERE LEGAL SANCTIONS AGAINST LOW-LEVEL TRAFFICKERS THAN NOW PERMITTED BY LAW (MAXIMUM FOUR-YEAR IMPRISONMENT) AND (B) ULTIMATELY LEGALIZING CANNABIS USE IN THE NETHERLANDS (AN OPTION TEMPORARILY ABANDONED IN VIEW OF THE OBLIGATIONS IMPOSED BY THE NETHERLAND'S ADHERENCE TO THE SINGLE CONVENTION). SAMSOM REPLIED THAT THERE IS NO DIRECT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PROPOSED PROJECT AND THE GOVERNMENT'S STATED POLICY INTENTIONS. HOWEVER, SHOULD FURTHER RESEARCH SUBSTANTIATE FINDINGS SUCH AS DR. POWELSON'S, IT WOULD THEN APPEAR TO BE IN ORDER FOR GOVERNMENTS TO CONSIDER WHAT SOCIAL (AS OPPOSED TO PENAL) SANCTIONS AGAINST CANNABIS USE OUGHT TO BE PROMOTED OR ESTABLISHED.

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6. THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL IN THE CONTEXT OF GON DRUG POLICY. THE GON NOTE TO PARLIAMENT OF JANUARY 1974 (SEE HAGUE 247, 1/17/74) DIFFERENTIATES SOFT DRUG ABUSE FROM HARD DRUG ABUSE. PERTINENT LANGUAGE IN THE NOTE REABS AS FOLLOWS (UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION):

"..... THE SIGNATORIES ARE OF THE OPINION THAT THE POLICY MUST BE AIMED AT SEPARATING TRAFFIC IN

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CANNABIS PRODUCTS FROM DRUGS WITH AN UNACCEPTABLE RISK AS REGARDS TRAFFICKING IN DRUGS WITH AN UNACCEPTABLE RISK AND CANNABIS PRODUCTS, THE CONCLUSION ALREADY SEEMS JUSTIFIED THAT THE DIFFERENCE IN THE DANGEROUS NATURE OF THE SUBSTANCES SHOULD BE REFLECTED IN SEPARATE PENALTIES ... THE GOVERNMENT IS OF THE OPINION THAT THERE IS REASON TO SEEK A DIFFERENTIATION IN THESE PENAL SITUATIONS: INCREASING THE PENALTIES FOR TRAFFIC IN DRUGS WITH AN UNACCEPTABLE RISK, AND REDUCING THE ONE FOR TRAFFIC IN CANNABIS PRODUCTS..."

7. SAMSON'S RATIONALE FOR THE JOINT RESEARCH PROPOSAL, DESPITE THE GOVERNMENT'S STATED INTENTIONS REGARDING THE PENAL ASPECTS OF THE QUESTION, WAS TO THE EFFECT THAT THE CONTINUED WELL-BEING OF DYNAMIC SOCIO-ECONOMIC SYSTEMS, OF WHICH THE US AND THE NETHERLANDS ARE PRIME EXAMPLES, DEPENDS ON THE ABILITY OF INDIVIDUALS AT MOST LEVELS OF THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE TO MAKE DECISIONS WHICH REQUIRE THE PERFORMANCE OF COMPLEX

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MENTAL TASKS. THE PROPORTION OF THE POPULATION WHICH FALLS INTO THIS CATEGORY IN ECONOMICALLY AND TECHNOLOGICALLY DEVELOPED COUNTRIES IS MUCH GREATER THAN IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, SO THAT THE QUESTION WOULD APPEAR TO HAVE GREATER IMMEDIACY FOR THE FORMER GROUP OF COUNTRIES. THE IMPLICATION OF DR. POWELSON'S FINDINGS WOULD APPEAR TO BE THAT UNCONTROLLED DISSEMINATION AND USE OF "CANNABIS" COULD HAVE A SEVERE IMPACT ON THE QUALITY OF THE "MENTAL" RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO A SOCIETY HEAVILY DEPENDENT ON THIS RESOURCE. BY FURTHER IMPLICATION, IT COULD BE EXPECTED THAT UNRESTRICTED CANNABIS USE COULD LEAD TO AN OVERALL DETERIORATION IN THE QUALITY OF THIS RESOURCE. THE COROLLARIES OF THIS PROPOSITION NEED NO ELABORATION.

8. ASKED IF HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE PRODUCTIVE FOR AN EXPERT FROM THE US TO VISIT THE NETHERLANDS TO DISCUSS THE PROPOSAL IN GREATER DEPTH (ASSUMING THERE IS INTEREST ON THE PART OF THE US) SAMSOM REPLIED THAT HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES WERE NOT YET PREPARED TO ENTER THAT STAGE. AT THIS POINT THEY WOULD LIKE TO KNOW ONLY WHETHER THE PROPOSAL IS OF INTEREST. DEPENDING ON THE US RESPONSE, SAMSON AND HIS COLLEAGUES WILL THEN EITHER (A) REFLECT FURTHER ON THE SCOPE AND OTHER ASPECTS OF THE STUDY, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT ANY COMMENTS RECEIVED, OR (B) REVIEW WHAT OTHER QUESTIONS, IF ANY, OFFER THEMSELVES AS LIKELY CANDIDATES FOR A JOINT PROGRAM AT THIS TIME.

9. AS BACKGROUND, SAMSON INDICATED THAT HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES FEEL THAT STATE SECRETARY MEIJER'S PROPOSAL FOR A US-NETHERLANDS EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION OR RESEARCH IN REHABILITATIVE AND RELATED SOCIAL ASPECTS OF DRUG ABUSE WOULD LIKELY YIELD FEW TANGIBLE BENEFITS TO EITHER PARTICIPANT. INASMUCH AS RESEARCH IN THIS AREA MUST NECESSARILY RELATE TO A PARTICULAR CULTURAL CONTEXT AND MUST INEVITABLY CONCERN ITSELF WITH THE QUESTION OF MOTIVATION. SAMSON REAONS THAT GIVEN THE CONSIDERABLE DIFFERENCES IN MORES, SOCIAL STRUCTURE, AND SOCIAL MILIEU BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES, STUDIES CONDUCTED IN THE ONE COUNTRY WOULD, FOR THE MOST PART, HAVE LIMITED RELEVANCE
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IN THE OTHER. SAMSOM MAY BE MISTAKEN IN THIS JUDGMENT; FURTHERMORE, STATE SECRETARY MEIJER, WHOM THE EMBASSY WILL BE SEEING SHORTLY MAY CONTINUE TO SEE DISTINCT VALUE IN JOINT RESEARCH.

10. COMMENT: FROM OUR LAYMAN'S POINT OF VIEW, THE PROPOSAL BROUGHT TO US BY SAMSOM HAS CONSIDERABLE MERIT.

CONSIDERED IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EMBASSY'S OVERALL EFFORTS TO ENCOURAGE THE DUTCH TO SHOW GREATER INITIATIVE IN THE DRUG ABUSE FIELD IN GENERAL, WE RECOMMEND AS POSITIVE A RESPONSE TO THE PROPOSAL AS POSSIBLE, PREFERABLY BY A COMMITMENT IN PRINCIPLE TO UNDERTAKE SUCH A JOINT STUDY WITH THE DUTCH AT AN EARLY DATE. AT A MINIMUM WE SHOULD OFFER TO SHARE WITH THEM THE RESULTS OF ANY RESEARCH WHICH MAY BE AVAILABLE IN THE US ON THE PROPOSED TOPIC.

11. ACTION REQUESTED: THE EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE THE DEPARTMENT DISTRIBUTING THIS MESSAGE TO THE APPROPRIATE WASHINGTON AGENCIES AND ADVISING THE EMBASSY WHETHER (A) THERE IS ANY INTEREST IN PURSUING THE PROPOSAL; (B) WHETHER THERE ARE RECENT STUDIES BY INDEPENDENT RESEARCHERS IN THE US ON THE PROPOSED TOPIC OR WHETHER SUCH RESEARCH IS UNDERWAY OR CONTEMPLATED. IN THIS CONNECTION, WE HAVE NOTED DR. DUPONT'S NOV 19 STATEMENT BEFORE THE SENATE NARCOTICS AND ALCHOLISM SUBCOMMITTEE (STATE 255450), COPIES OF WHICH HAVE BEEN MADE AVAILABLE TO MEIJER AND SAMSOM AND WOULD APPRECIATE RECEIVING VIA MOST EXPEDITIOUS MEANSNY COPIES OF THE 1974 HEW REPORT

"MARIHUANA AND HEALTH".

#FOOTNOTE: "CANNABIS PRODUCTS", ACCORDING TO A HEALTH MINISTRY OFFICIAL, INCLUDE MARIHUANA AND HASHISH, BUT EXCLUDE MORE POTENT PRODUCTS SUCH AS "HASH OIL".
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